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[127] from the body without making the wound much longer because a barb is carved into it and this impedes its being drawn out. If they have time they invariably decapitate those of their enemies whom they wound in battle, and they do this with great dexterity as they find the joint between the vertebrae in a moment and sever the head with one slash of their knives made from the jawbone of the "palometa" [a vicious type of fish which also goes by the name of "piraña"--Translator]. After the head has been severed the scalp is removed and then stretched and dried, and kept in order to celebrate their more important fiestas and to demonstrate their bravery.

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492 "They used, in the old days, to go about on foot, but they have since become great horsemen having stolen large numbers of horses from the ranches and towns of the Spaniards. From the city of Santa Fé alone and in the space of only 20 years they have made off with some 15,000 horses. That is why they are such good riders today, surpassing the Spaniards. Running after a fleeing horse and using only their lances to help them off the ground they will leap upon it and mount either from the side or from behind. They do not use stirrups and their saddles are very meager affairs, so much so that they often ride saddleless, but so swiftly that only rarely can the Spanish overtake them for they make their horses fly by whipping them with a three tailed lash which they always carry with them. When on the warpath they are happy with but skimpy rations which each carries for himself, and they make fun of the many preparations which the Spaniards make since they, with a small amount of half-grilled meat and whatever they can glean from the countryside in the way of fruit or other things undertake treks of a hundred leagues to wage war, their bed being the hard ground or at most a stiff cowhide. But this is nothing unusual for them since their beds are hardly of better stuff when they are at home.

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554 "These latter are made of straw which is spread all over the floor of their habitation which, although low-ceilinged, is very long in order to allow room for the whole family group to stretch out, each family having its own fire in the center. The oldest lies down [576] at the head in the place of greatest prestige and then, on either side, his sons according to age, followed by the grandchildren and other descendents, each with their families in such a manner that the way in which they lie down to sleep is a living representation of the family tree. They have no covering other than the branches and grasses with which they thatch their hovels, and in which ~~the~~ ~~birds~~ ~~are~~ ~~born~~ ~~continually~~. The most important family member may have a mantle of deer or nutria skins to keep him warm.

756 or dies from purely natural causes. So when a person becomes sick or has any pain, the sorcerer is immediately called to take away the pain or to restore health. And let no one think that the sorcerer (witchdoctor) must feel the pulse of the sick person or make him stick out his tongue or confuse him and his relatives with the many questions with which our doctors confuse us--no, this would seem to them to be an admission of ignorance and furthermore, highly impertinent; nor do they cudgel their brains to find the cause of the infirmity or care whether there be herbs or special remedies to combat it--not at all, for it would only be a waste of time. Their method of effecting a cure is more simple. The patient having said that he feels pain in such and such a place, the witchdoctor does nothing other than to place his hands on the affected part, but he places them together and half-closed, in such a way that they are in the shape of a hollow vessel, exactly as when boys, with half-closed hands wish to imitate the sound of a trumpet or horn. And with their hands in that way, they begin to blow through [605] them with all the lung power at their command, accompanying the puffing with groans and howls, and persevering in this for hours on end, repeating the ceremony with greater or less frequency according to the state of the invalid and the possibility of payment for their work. Those who have nothing must yet give something to the witchdoctor, and those who have possessions must determine to give all of them to him, and they do so. Some however appear to doubt or at least to mistrust the witchdoctor's ability, for although they will give him all he asks for beforehand, they force him to return everything if his treatment is not efficacious. The one who is most fortunate in the recovery of his patients is the one who acquires most prestige, and he makes a good living. If the patient gets worse, and the witchdoctors see that he is going to die they usually declare him beyond recovery and abandon him in order not to lose prestige, and make excuse as to the incurability of the disease by claiming that some more powerful evil power is acting against him.

[763] Often, if the witchdoctor who states that the patient is past hope is of some fame, the relatives of the patient will take the sick man out to the burial grounds while he is still alive, will dig his grave, choke him to death and bury him. When, on the other hand, one of their leaders or some person of great influence or having many relatives or who is generally well liked becomes seriously ill or is close to death, then there is usually a consultation or general gathering of all the

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756 witchdoctors of the vicinity, who never declare the man beyond re-
554covery but bend their every effort in making a great show of their
ridiculous and childish practices in order to make death keep away.
Gathered, then, in the invalid's hut, they stand about him at some
little distance in a semicircle and do not take their eyes off him but
observe his every movement with care. They begin to blow and
gesture with their hands, now forcefully and with verve, now slowly
and softly according as they see that the patient seems more fatigued
or gets back some of his strength; and all this in order to pretend that
they see death approaching and are trying to chase it away. In the
[533] same manner they begin to sing in base, funereal tones an air similar
to a continuous harsh howling, and, being guided by the condition of
the invalid they modify their expressions, gestures and tone of voice.
The stricken person for his part always tries, by means of his fatigue,
his cries or moans, his frightened eyes and perturbed expression to let
the others know what he is feeling and the state he considers himself
to be in; and the witchdoctors, following these obvious signs, gesticu-
late more or less, blow and howl with greater or less softness [606] or
loudness, come close and hurl themselves wildly towards the invalid or
gently fall back a short distance. When it seems that the sick man is
about to die they come at a bound so close to him, heightening their
gestures to such a pitch and howling so unceasingly and in such broken,
forced and hoarse tones, with eyes so wide open and fearful and with
so many expressions of terror, that anyone could easily be led to be-
lieve that they do in fact see death in the guise of some deformed and
terrible figure and that they wish to frighten it, make it flee or seize
it. All this is done so seriously and naturally that no one would suspect
them of perpetrating a hoax or deceiving; but the fact is that even if
the invalid were still able to live for a while, terror would soon finish
him off."

"The witchdoctors are also believed to have the power to drive
away and make disappear plagues and calamities such as smallpox,
which wreaks havoc among them; the lack of water or its excess and
other things. To this end the witchdoctors meet, go off a little way
from the camp and, seated upon the ground, like so many Jeremiahs,
begin to sing their lamentations, without words of course, accompanying
[534] the sad song with the choc-que-choc produced by the coming together
of small stones placed in a hollow gourd which they hold in their hands
and rattle to beat time."

In order to gather together in a common place, in addition to the tracks they leave they twist branches and handful of grass at crossroads in order that their companions may know where to find them, they having prearranged the meaning of the signs. 487
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[193] Another means of communication is by making fires. Dur-201
ing our traveling about the Chaco we were continually surrounded by fires, either at close quarters or far away, fires which sometimes took on the proportions of colossal blazes. And often, when we thought that we were in absolute solitude, it would happen that upon approaching an Indian village we would be informed that we were expected, and we would hear tell of the order which had been observed in our march.

They make use, moreover, of many spies and informers. In Mataco the former are called niguaiecque, and the latter gu'ëicáss. 701
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They apparently do have some sort of tactical organization: thus they have a general chief, subordinate chief and petty chieftains. The first is called, in Mataco, canniat tizán, the second, canniat, and as for the last, I have forgotten.

The general chiefs are chosen at second remove, that is, from among the subordinate chiefs, who, in turn, are elected by the people. Normally a marked preference is shown for the late chief's sons, provided they be of age, courageous and good. But then, of course, we must say that in these elections the same passions are present which appear amongst us in our elections.

They also have another category of persons, whom they call nyát and corresponds vaguely to the Spanish "caballero" or the "galantuomo" of southern Italy. So it is that they refer to any white persons whom they consider of quality with the name nyát. It is to be supposed that a like distinction is made among the other Indians. In Peru and wherever the Quechua language is spoken, gentlemen are called Viracocha. 554
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Once the general chief has been elected the subordinate elector chiefs go to call on him when they can, which visits are celebrated with the accustomed drinking and eating orgies. A general chieftainship almost always embraces villages far removed from each other.

The Matacos call those who visit them tzicki-ac.

The authorities among the Chaco Indians play an almost purely military role. In peace time they lose practically all their prestige,

do, or in white garments as do the Chinese, but they show in their own way that they are in mourning by shaving their heads which are the only parts of their bodies with covering. The women, instead of parading themselves about in their somber garb in churches and public places, hide themselves away in their huts and avoid all contact with their neighbors; they refrain absolutely from talking and apply themselves more diligently to their household duties. They continue in this mourning for a year, during which time it is not proper for them to remarry. Whenever they must needs go out they take the most secluded paths and if one should chance to meet them they cover their faces; they will not talk on any account and avoid any occasion for doing so. It happened that travelers [208] who have met up by chance in out-of-the-way and therefore suspect places, with women like these who are withdrawn and will not speak, have mistreated and even killed them, being ignorant of the custom.

In addition to shaving their heads they also wail -- a monotonous expressionless chant -- which is apparently dictated by convention and accompanied by the beating of the "pin-pin" which, as I believe I have already said, is a mortar hollowed out of a tree trunk with a tool or with fire. Water is poured into this mortar and then a skin is stretched tightly over it to form a sort of drum. They beat upon this skin with a gourd filled with grains of corn or algarrobo seeds.

They wail in unison at certain stipulated hours, but the widow or mother does so without ceasing, even when she walks through the streets about her business. Relatives and friends accompany the deceased to the grave, and if he be a well loved chief or some famous witch doctor then the whole tribe will go.

Chiefs and particularly famous witch doctors occupy positions of honor among the a'hot who await them, and their influence in the spirit world will be in proportion to the esteem in which they were held by their neighbors of which the funeral rites will be a yardstick. And so when one of them dies the Indians who are gathered about his bier beg him to bend every effort in their favor when he is far off among the a'hot, and try to influence the storm a'hot and the plague a'hot or the famine a'hot to pardon their villages and visit their enemies. The dying

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man promises to do this and his companions by way of reward do him even greater honor at his funeral, thus augmenting the departed one's power for good in the spirit world. Do we not do likewise when we implore those who die in the odor of sanctity to intercede in heaven for us in our pilgrimage through this vale of tears?

Sorrow points up the basic similarity in all men, and the harmony of the human character in actions and speech, hopes and doubts, is never manifested more clearly than when confronted with a grave.

Chapter XI

Doctors

In the Chaco there are both male and female doctors, but very few medicines; treatment being purely empirical because of the ignorance and superstition of those Indians. [209]

It is strange that the wild inhabitants of the Chaco have not discovered remedies, but that is the way it is, in part because of their lack of intelligence but mostly because of the superstition which grips them in all matters respecting disease and sickness.

They firmly believe that sickness is caused by an a hot's getting into a person, and therefore all efforts are bent in the direction of getting rid of it by the only means possible, that is by conjuring it out.

It follows logically from this that their doctors cannot be other than witch doctors or priests or what have you. Apart from this their very superstition is a consequence of each person's need to free himself of a present evil and his ignorance as to how to bring this about. That generous measure of wit native to man does service as a middle road between ignorance and superstition.

Nevertheless they realize their lack of efficacious remedies and also the superiority of the whites in this matter, in whom they have great faith as healers; while the poorer and more

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or of waging war, coupled with an iron constitution, allows them²⁶¹
to stuff themselves like gunny sacks. 147

A remarkable thing! Be it because of racial relationship, 261
be it rather because of the great similarity in their way of life, 171
the fact is that this same pendulum-like swing between extreme 147
frugality and enormous voracity is also to be found among the
gauchos, and all the other inhabitants of the Argentine non-urban
areas in general, not excluding other peoples of the earth who
live in similar social conditions. So true is it that the same
causes produce the same results regardless of where they happen
to occur.

These Indians are very jealous of their equality. They do 554
not allow others to surpass them and the women are the first to
attack any of their companions who, either because of natural
gifts or the husband's ability, find themselves approaching a
favorable position.

I cannot forget a bitter disillusion which fell to my lot on 556
one occasion. Tajo, my Mataco language teacher, has a wife 123
who is an extraordinarily beautiful Gypsy type and looks, at a
distance, like one of the more beautiful women of Buenos Aires.
The husband was very much in love with her and I thought that I
could not do less than to make her a present of a few cheap
trinkets and garments. The husband added a few more things to
my gifts and so the young woman was able to dress herself up in
a manner unrivaled in the area.

As soon as she went out to show off her finery before her
friends, dressed in her brightly colored clothes, she was received
with admiration, but also with cries of protest.

I, who have often been led to sin in the direction of artistic
platonism, wished to see the Mataco beauty in her new regalia
and felt I had a certain right to [223] demand to be allowed to
do so, but I found that it was not possible. The chief had for-
bidden her to wear her gifts because the other squaws had com-
plained that her luxurious attire detracted from their own value;
and so the young matron had been obliged to distribute her cloth-
ing among the others and to keep just a few scraps for herself
which she would wear only every now and then, and then not
openly.

Even among the savages one must adhere to sumptuary laws!

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913) 1932 S17 Mataco S17
Toba S112

No 1) Indian Tribes of the Argentine and Bolivian Chaco.

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The aversion to eating fish among the Toba women is met with in connection with mourning customs also. As to the ideas underlying this superstition, they will be considered in a later chapter.

The puberty ceremonies of the Bolivian *Mataco* are much the same as those of the Tobas. The first menstruation (*opetcléh* in the Mataco language) is regarded as a critical event which necessitates certain precautions. As is the case among the Tobas, these precautions are more elaborate when the girl is the daughter of a great chief. In that case she is completely isolated for five days, strictly dieting. Every evening drums are beaten outside her hut to keep off the evil spirits, the *aittáh* or *nahút* which are trying to do her harm. As usual, a drinking-feast is arranged for the men.

If the girl is the daughter of an ordinary man she is allowed to go out, but every evening a dance is held in her honour. This is the ring-dance which the Mataco call *Nahútsak* and which like all Mataco dances is purely ceremonial in its character. The girl sits in the middle of the ring, having the face covered with a cloth, while the other women dance and chant around her in order to keep off the *nahút*.

Not only the first menstruation, but similarly the following monthly courses of a woman are regarded by the Mataco as critical in so far as she is then particularly exposed to supernatural dangers. The Mataco woman therefore on these occasions always takes the precaution to restrict her diet, abstaining particularly from eating fish and meat.

There is one more custom which is practised among many Chaco tribes at the time of puberty and therefore may be considered in this connection — the custom of *tattooing*. Tattooing is done by the *Mataco* and the *Choroti* in about the same way, the women being always and the men sometimes tattooed. The operation is carried out by an old woman: the skin is pricked with a cactus thorn or a sharp bone so that the blood flows, whereupon soot mixed with saliva is carefully rubbed into the wounds. Since the operation is of course extremely painful and makes the girl sick for some days, it is performed gradually, during the course of several years, the intention being that it should be completed when the girl is marriageable. Only the face is tattooed. The first marks are done on the forehead when the girl is about six or seven years old. In the course of the following years new marks — small circles, crosses, half-moons, lines — are added, and when the girl has attained the age of twelve to fourteen years and is considered marriageable, practically the whole face is covered with them. Since the wounds rubbed with ashes cause

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583 this will not influence her choice and that of her parents. An abortion will be
 581 produced artificially should the man prove to be unacceptable. Should the girl
 847 prove to be pregnant at a time when she has started a new, more stable, relation,
 the new young man will demand that she aborts.

585 Thus the consummation of the marriage, the creation of a family, is, for the
 591 Mataco, identical with the commencement of a completely valid marriage. As
 [178] a rule the family moves shortly after the birth to its own hut, though still near
 [342] the girl's parents. Village matrilocality is permanent, and until about 40 years
 ago, when communal houses were still the most common, the sharing of a hut
 with the wife's family for a whole lifetime, was the rule.

593 Already in connexion with her initiation each girl is given certain advice by
 [881] her mother concerning the proper behaviour as a married person. The mother
 [867] will tell her, for example, that she must treat her coming in-laws as though they
 [606] were her own parents and that she must always be generous when it is a matter
 of sharing food with them. She will also counsel the girl to show respect to her
 future husband, fetching fuel, for example, when he is away fishing, and ensuring
 that there is plenty of water for him when he returns from hunting. Willingness to
 cooperate and mutual respect are very typical of the relations between man and
 wife. The man's position in marriage is formally the same. He must regard his
 [606] wife's parents as his own, must be generous to them, though in fact they do not
 treat him with the same indulgence they would show a son. In any conflict that
 may arise they side with the daughter against the husband. Should he not be
 sufficiently industrious he will be sent out to fish or hunt, and if unsuccessful he
 will be reproached, something that no Mataco would do to a son. If a man quarrels
 with his mother-in-law he is chased away. His happiness depends to a high degree
 upon an equable temperament and ability to obtain food. But as his wife will
 [476] always share his bag with relations and friends, and because matrilocality prevails,
 the wife's family will always obtain the lion's share of what he brings back.

606 The position of a son-in-law as a stranger in another band also raises difficulties
 609 for him. In case of dispute his wife's family or other local people will be able to
 say: "We don't know him and don't trust him". Perhaps he has no kin in the
 village to vouch for him and give him assistance. The position of a son-in-law can
 thus be compared to that of a stranger in a big city, irresponsible because he is
 unknown, and overlooked for that reason.

593 The mutual relations of married couples are naturally stamped by matrilo-
 [554] cality and the woman's very considerable occupational effort, which together give
 the wife a good social position in relation to her husband. In the meantime it is
 more through the wife's family that this status is manifested. As between the
 sexes the husband still dominates. As a rule it is the husband who has the say,
 but it is often the woman who decides what is to be said. The latent tension
 [182] between family and sex results in a curiously unintegrated behaviour. By day a
 man and wife behave almost like strangers to each other. They are extremely terse

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755 went to rest, smoking and talking with the assistants, but the medicine men did not stop singing and shaking their rattles, the sick man continuing to remain motionless. The dancing was resumed after a quarter of an hour, accompanied this time by the [533] rattles and singing of all the officiants and by the sick person's [535] bells. The participants had a fairly joyful air. The ceremony ended everyone sat down and began to smoke. Then they carried away the sticks and began to take off the ornaments, first those of the medicine men, then those of the assistants and dancers, and lastly those of the sick man, who went quietly to his hut.

Note

[774] naLi'le is a spirit who lives underground and steals the [776] images of men. Sometimes those whom it has taken thus become medicine men.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness for the Benefit of One Person

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(March 20-24, 1933)

A woman who was seriously ill and very rich was treated by five great medicine men of the region.

[347] In the area around the house where she lived, about five square meters of ground were cleared, wooden posts were erected there, and a kind of tent was erected; one of the posts, of about six meters, was decorated with two large pieces of cloth and an old Argentinian flag. Around the tent were placed the objects demanded by the illness or appropriate to please it: a spread-out mosquito net, a poncho on a weaving loom, an old suitcase, some cloths of loud colors, a saddle, a military coat,

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755 a storm lamp, a lance, and a gun. A little farther away fires
554 were prepared for cooking foods destined for the illness and a
bucket of water for the dancers. The sick woman was seated in
the middle of the tent on a bale of hay and some old cloths,
dressed in her best clothes and covered with ritual ornaments.
[292] The five medicine men were also adorned; they were wearing
[301] feather belts, rattles, colonial helmets, /215/ and other precious
[302] objects; the entire lower part of their faces was daubed with
black. There were also about 20 dancers, dressed up in
755 feathers, red belts decorated with shells, rattles, caps, red
554 cloths, whistles, and old broken watches; about 10 old women
535 were running around with pieces of cloth in their hands, and
one of them with an umbrella. Everyone, including the sick
woman, danced and sang; sometimes the medicine men and
the sick woman stopped, and the medicine men blew on her;
then the dance was resumed. After some time the chief
medicine man blew on his bone flute and the dance stopped
outright. The sick woman danced by herself, slowly lifting
one foot, then the other, three or four centimeters above the
ground, and staying in one place; during this time, two medi-
cine men were shaking their rattles, a man was tapping in his
hands, laughing, and another was shaking two flat, tin bottles -
in which powder is sold in the interior of Argentina - filled with
seeds; this lasted about ten minutes, and then the medicine
755 men joined in the dance, but only for a short time. After a
554 stop two of them approached the sick woman and began to take
off her things; during this time a medicine man was shaking
his rattles along the woman's body, beginning with the head.
Slowly all the ornaments were taken off, the assistants tapped
the ground on the spot where they had fallen, then, running,
they went to throw them outside; having gathered them together
they shook them several times, and then carefully arranged
them. The sick woman was seated in the middle of the tent
and given something to drink. The ceremony was interrupted
and then continued.

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755 The whole ceremony lasted from March 20 to March 24,
555 every day from 8 A.M. to 2 P.M. and from 8 to 10 P.M.

Each day at the end of the ceremony a shot was fired to frighten the illness.

Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness
for the Benefit of One Person

(March 26, 1933)

755 On March 26 another woman who had the same symptoms
of illness as the preceding one was treated in the following
manner: the site already described was used, but the flag was
replaced by a large piece of red cloth with blue flowers, and
a thick tuft of ostrich feathers was attached to the top of the
post. The staff was decorated with ritual belts. Offerings of
the same type as those for the preceding ceremony were placed
on the crossbars which separated the tent from the village.

755 During the entire ceremony the sick woman remained seated
535 /216/ on a bale of hay in the center of the tent; right next to
her were four of the great medicine men, a little farther away
about ten young dancers, and then a final circle of six or seven
women. All the officiants, adorned as usual with feathers,
ritual belts, and little bells, danced and sang. A passage was
[123] contrived in the separating crossbars, and, as I insisted on it,
a medicine man came to tell me that this opening was intended
to let the illness out; I asked him if my presence would prevent
it from going out; he told me no, but that I was running the risk
that it would enter me at the moment it left the body of the
sick woman.

The dance was halted at a sign from the chief medicine
man, and two men, taking a poncho, striped red and white, by
its ends, began to dance, jumping sideways, legs open; then

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Ceremony for the Expulsion of Illness
for the Benefit of One Person

(April 2, 1933)

755 A woman being sick, she was taken care of, but as she was
[55] less rich, the ceremony had a more modest character. Opposite
the sick woman's house they put up a tent under which she lay
down. The offerings were only some cloths and string bags.
At my arrival the medicine man was in the act of speaking with
the illness, while an old woman, also a medicine woman, was
singing and blowing on the sick woman. The others were talk-
ing among themselves, without appearing to be very concerned
[213] with what was going on. After an interruption, during which
everyone drank the wine demanded by the illness, a man began
to run around the sick woman, singing, his body bent forward
and his arms dangling. The chief medicine man continued to
speak with the illness, while the woman blew on the sick woman
and another medicine man put a certain number of covers from
illustrated newspapers and 20-centavo popular novels around
her head. The runner stopped and the chief medicine man
began to talk with the others. Everyone sat down, drinking
water, and two women began to walk rapidly around the others,
singing. One of them stopped, and a little later the other did
755 the same. Then all the assistants began to dance, accompanied
763 by hiccups from the sick woman, who appeared to be getting
worse and worse; in fact she died in the middle of the ceremony.

Immediately after the death the dance was stopped; the
old women ran around the tent, shaking maracas and singing,
while two men laid the dead woman on her right side, bending
her legs and crossing (or bending) her arms over her breast. She
was wrapped in the cloths on which she had been lying and
[152] carried to her house. The medicine men stripped themselves
[756] quietly while all the women of the village wailed the customary
lamentations.